

Telehealth Watch: CVS's MinuteClinic Goes Virtual

More than ever before, consumers expect convenience. And because the healthcare field isn't immune to that expectation, telehealth services are increasing in popularity. A new offering by pharmacy/retail giant CVS gives consumers access to telemedicine on their cell phones, thereby satisfying that demand for convenience and backing it with an instantly recognizable brand.

Earlier this month, CVS Health announced that its retail medical clinic (MinuteClinic) will now offer virtual healthcare for individuals seeking treatment or advice for relatively minor medical concerns. Using their mobile device, consumers can access the MinuteClinic Video Visits telehealth platform anytime of the day or night, and any day of the week. It doesn't get more convenient than that.

Although CVS's virtual visits are at present available in only nine states (Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New Hampshire and Virginia) and Washington D.C., the company expects to roll out the telehealth product across the country — in every state where permitted — before the new year comes ringing in.

Got a minute? CVS is betting that you do . . .

Many CVS stores (and select Target stores as well) contain MinuteClinics within them, an aspect of the brick-and-mortar establishments that allow shoppers to consult with a medical professional (in addition to a pharmacist, that is) in what may feel like an unlikely setting. CVS Health teamed up with Teladoc (one of the largest telemedicine organizations) to add a virtual dimension to MinuteClinic for the individuals who would rather seek advice through the CVS app, from the comfort of their own homes, or perhaps from their workplace.

"As we continue to move the capabilities of virtual care forward, this is an exciting advancement," said Jason Gorevic, the CEO of Teladoc. "CVS Health's expansion of their health care model to include video visits brings even more care delivery options to patients and Teladoc is proud to work with them on this offering."

CVS Health had been exploring consumer outlook on telehealth prior to the launch of MinuteClinic Video Visits. One early study revealed that a whopping 95% of telehealth patients reported a high level of satisfaction with the care received. The same impressive percentage of respondents said that they liked the convenience of the telehealth platform and that they came away with a favorable impression of utilizing telehealth in general.

Video visits: an "innovative care option"

Dr. Troyen A. Brennan is Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of CVS Health. In a press release, Brennan said: "We're excited to be able to bring this innovative care option to patients. At CVS Health, we're committed to delivering high-quality care when and where our patients need it and at prices they can afford. Through this new telehealth offering, patients now have an additional option for seeking care that is even more convenient for them."

CVS video visits are available for patients two years old and above. A health questionnaire must first be completed for the patient needing care, which then allows a board-certified, state-licensed healthcare provider to be matched with the individual. Video visits are intended to treat minor illnesses, injuries, or skin conditions. Practitioners can prescribe medications when appropriate, and when an in-person trip to the doctor is warranted, the physician would explain that to the patient, and would direct the individual to see a local provider.

For now, the \$59 price tag is on the patient



Although insurance does not yet cover the \$59 video visit fee, CVS Health expects that to change in the near future.

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